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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 4, 2009

NEWS RELEASE

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Nearly 400 Cited for Seat Belt Violations During Night Time *Click It or Ticket* Initiative

Dover – Delaware law enforcement officers issued 390 citations for seat belt violations last week (Feb. 22 – 28) during the first *Click It or Ticket* campaign of 2009. The February enforcement and awareness effort focused on increasing seat belt use at night, because seat belt use is 10% lower at night in the First State than during the day time. That's why all checkpoints and saturation patrols took place between 9 p.m. and 4 a.m. and all public awareness messages focused on the importance of buckling up at night *as well as* in the daytime.

Safety officials say that the campaign came at a critically important time. Since January 1st of this year, 12 of the 16 (or 75%) drivers and passengers killed in motor vehicle crashes were not wearing seat belts.

"The lack of seat belt use in our fatal crashes is appalling," said Andrea Summers, Community Relations Office of Highway Safety for the Office of Highway Safety. "What is incredibly sad is that even though we have our highest statewide seat belt use rate ever, far too many people are dying on our roads because they didn't buckle up and many of these tragedies could have been prevented." Estimates are that seat belt use improves your chances of surviving a crash by up to 50%!

Not surprisingly, officers found more than just seat belt violations during enforcement activities. Fourteen law enforcement agencies statewide participated in the night time *Click It or Ticket* campaign. In addition to the 390 seat belt citations, and 13 child restraint citations, officers also arrested 13 individuals for DUI, apprehended 13 wanted individuals, made 9 drug arrests, 9 felony arrests and issued 545 citations for other traffic violations.

Two hundred seventy nine (279) of the 390 seat belt citations resulted from officers conducting saturation patrols in well lit areas. The remaining 111 seat belt citations came out of checkpoints

conducted by six law enforcement agencies, which included: Delaware State Police Troop 1, Dover Police, Middletown Police, New Castle County Police, Smyrna Police, and Wilmington Police. Dover and Smyrna Police each made one DUI arrest at their checkpoints, the Smyrna Police additionally made a felony and a drug arrest at their checkpoint, and New Castle County Police apprehended a wanted individual at theirs.

Delaware's seat belt law requires all vehicle occupants, even back seat passengers, to be "properly" buckled up. "Properly" means that both lap and shoulder belts must be worn, and that the shoulder belt must be worn across the chest. The law allows officers to pull over a driver if he sees any person in the vehicle not wearing a safety belt. The ticket, which goes to the driver no matter who is unbuckled in the vehicle, is a \$25.00 fine plus court administrative fees.

Delaware's child restraint law says that the driver is responsible for making sure all children in the vehicle are properly buckled up. All children under the age of 8 years or 65lbs must be in the appropriate child restraint seat (an infant, toddler or booster seat). Children who are 8 or at least 65lbs in weight, whichever comes first must be restrained in a seat belt. Children under the age of 12 years old must ride in the back seat when passenger air bags are present up front. Child restraint violations are also \$25.00 plus court administrative fees.

OHS will conduct *Click It or Ticket* again in May along with the rest of the country.

For more information on Delaware's seat belt law or the *Click It or Ticket* campaign, please visit the Office of Highway Safety's website at www.ohs.delaware.gov and click on the *Click It or Ticket* icon.

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